

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Commissioner's Office  
11 State House Station  
109 Capitol Street  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel: (207) 287-3707; Fax: (207) 287-3005  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

## MEMORANDUM

To: Government Oversight Committee  
From: Office of Child and Family Services  
Date: July 14, 2021  
Subject: Additional Background Information re: Child Welfare

Given the limited time scheduled for OCFS' testimony, we are providing this additional background information for the Government Oversight Committee meeting on July 14, 2021, related to child welfare.

### Number of Children in Care

The number of children in the care and custody of DHHS is reported publicly on the OCFS website.

CHILDREN IN DHHS CUSTODY (POINT IN TIME) TREND 2020-21



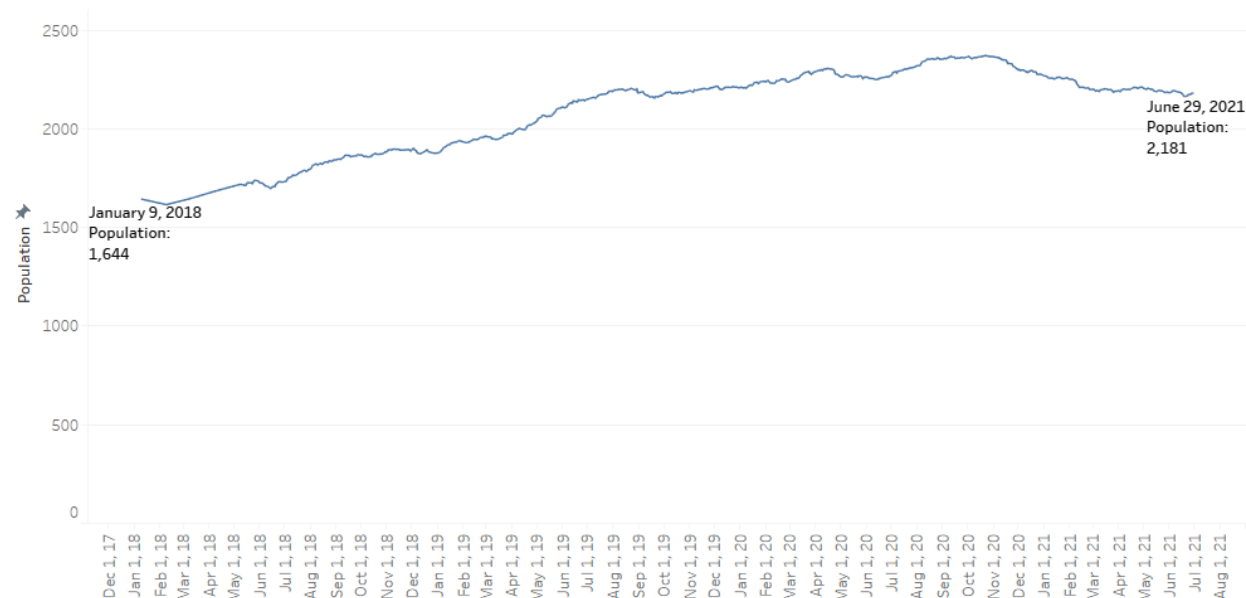
The total number of children in care is affected both by children coming into care and children exiting care. For example, in a given week 20 children may enter the Department's care, while another 20 may exit to be reunified with their parents or adopted, which would result in no change in the total number of children in care. As court hearings and other child welfare practices have generally resumed or increased, OCFS has continued its focus on timely and safe exits for children in care to long-term permanency. The data indicates that this has resulted in an

overall decline in the number of children in care as children exit to reunification, adoption, and permanency guardianship.

OCFS would also note that in December of 2020, the Federal government enacted the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act, which suspended youth from aging out of foster care and permitted re-entry of youth who had left foster care from January 2020 to April 2021. Youth that otherwise would have aged out will be eligible to remain in state custody through September 30, 2021. The number of children in custody in these charts includes youth who are over the age of 18 but have remained connected to the Department through a Voluntary Extended Support (V9) Agreement. In March of 2020, OCFS received guidance from the Federal Children's Bureau on the implementation of the Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act and began implementing the legislation, allowing youth who otherwise would have aged out of the V9 program to remain connected to the Department and those who previously aged out to reconnect through a V9.

The chart below shows the number of children in care over a longer period of time.

CHILDREN IN DHHS CUSTODY (POINT IN TIME) TREND JANUARY 2018 - PRESENT



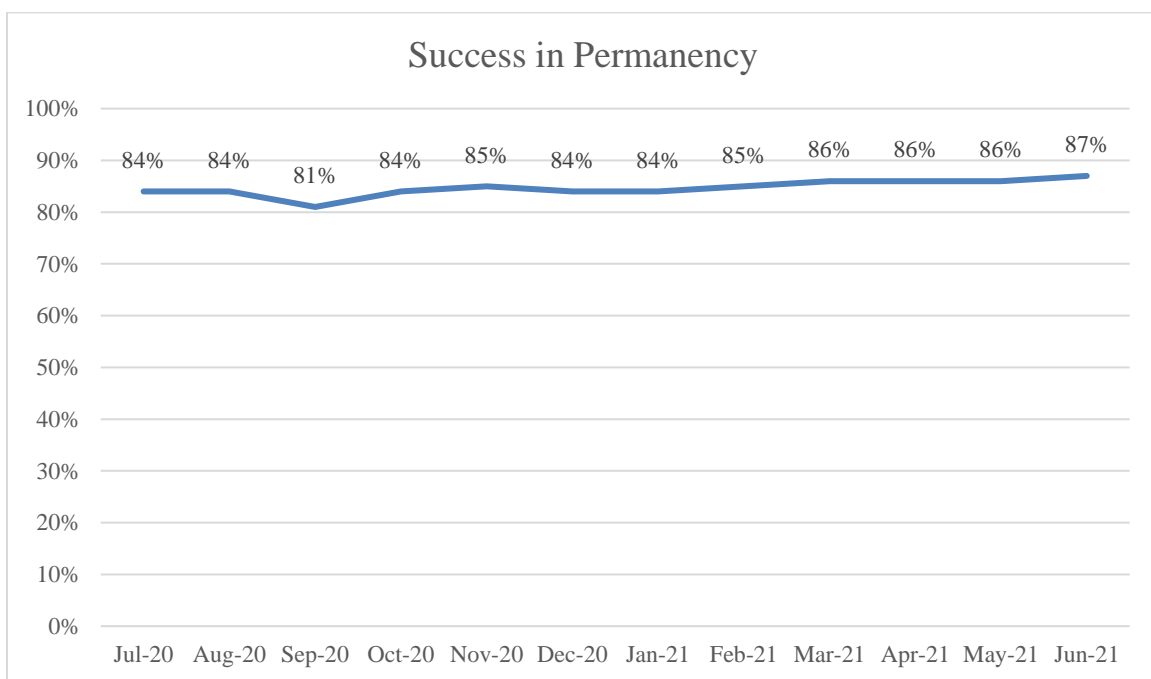
### Child Welfare Measures of Performance

The federal government, through the Administration of Children and Families (ACF), requires states and territories to report on a number of performance measures. Three of these measures are reported publicly on the OCFS website and are shown below with discussion.

One key federal performance measure is **timeliness of permanency**, measured by the percentage of children who have achieved permanency within 12 months of entering care. The following chart shows the current performance is the highest level of achievement in the last four years.

| Federal Measure                    | FFY 17 | FFY 18 | FFY 19 | FFY 20 | FFY 21 (YTD through June) |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------------|
| Permanency in 12 Months of Removal | 26.5%  | 29.0%  | 30.9%  | 26.7%  | <b>33.3%</b>              |

The federal government also recognizes that while timeliness to permanency is important, success in permanency is equally so. As a result, an additional federal performance measure is **success in permanency**. Maine is currently at 87%. Note that the performance over the past year has slightly increased, indicating that success in permanency has not diminished while timeliness of permanency has increased.

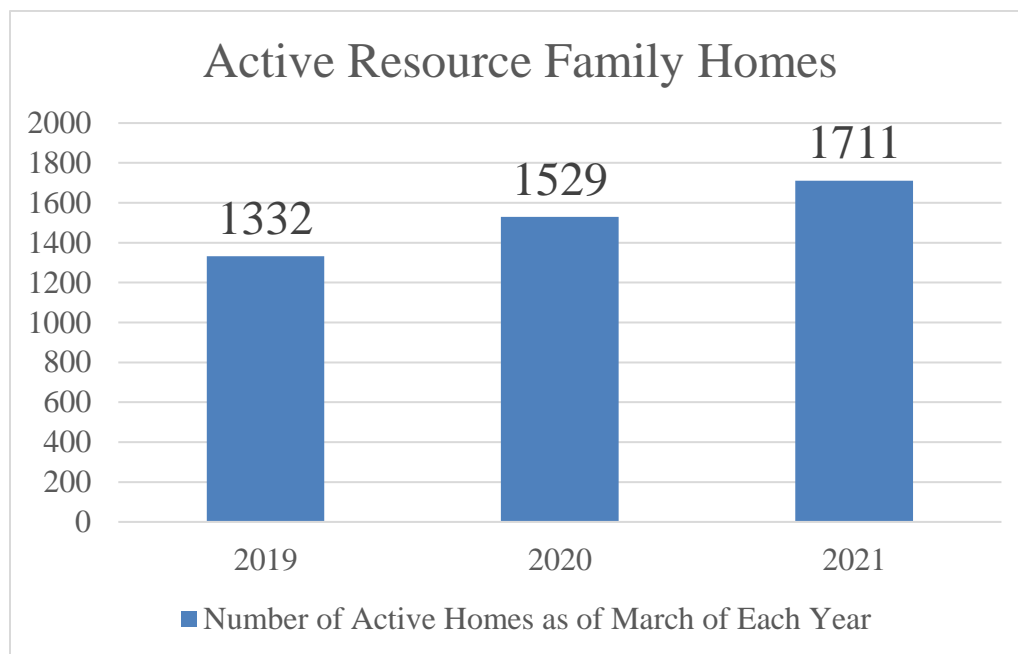


The third federal performance measure that OCFS reports publicly on its website is **Safety While in State Custody**. This measure is a rather complicated rate calculation specified by the federal government. It is not a percentage, and in this federal measure a lower result is indicative of better performance. The national benchmark is a rate of 8.5 or less. Maine is surpassing the federal benchmark with a rate of 6.52. Maine has posted results better than the federal benchmark in 11 of the last 12 months.

| Jul-20 | Aug-20 | Sep-20 | Oct-20 | Nov-20 | Dec-20 | Jan-21 | Feb-21 | Mar-21 | Apr-21 | May-21 | Jun-21 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 8.79   | 8.23   | 7.78   | 7.48   | 7.21   | 7.06   | 6.92   | 7.44   | 6.97   | 7.74   | 6.13   | 6.52   |

## **Recruitment and Retention of Resource Parents**

OCFS' effort to recruit and retain resource parents continue. From 2019 to 2021 there was an increase in the number of licensed resource homes by 379 (a 28.5% increase), this increase included the time period from 2020 to 2021, as we started to see a decline in the number of children in care, the number rose by 182 homes. OCFS continues its work with A Family for ME to recruit individuals interested in providing care to children in state custody, including targeted recruitment based on the needs of specific Districts or children in care.



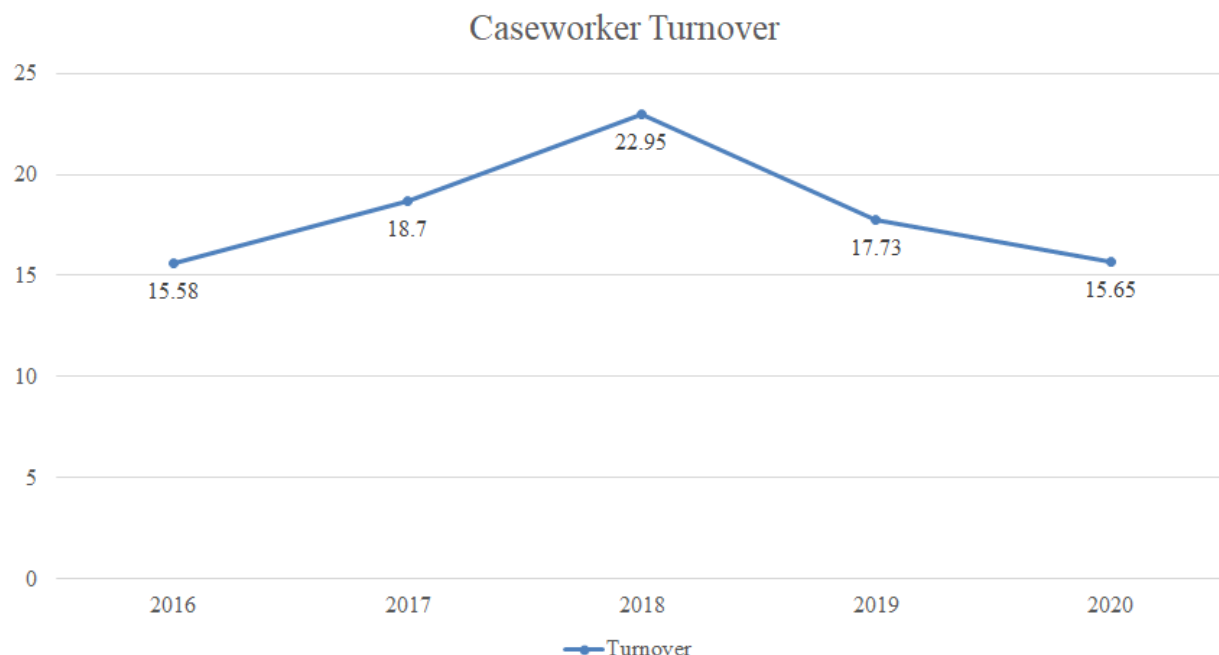
## **Recruitment and Retention of Child Welfare Staff**

Since September of 2018, OCFS has benefitted from several initiatives which have increased staffing within child welfare, including new caseworker, supervisor, and support staff positions. These new staff have made a significant difference in OCFS' ability to provide quality child welfare services throughout the state.

| CY   | Caseworker  | Supervisor | Support Staff                   | Authorized Child Welfare Positions |
|------|---|------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2018 | 16 (10 case carrying; 5 Intake; 1 Background Check) | 16         | 8 (all lines effective 10/1/18) | 578 (as of October 1, 2018)        |
| 2019 | 41 (33 case carrying; 8 Intake)                     | 8          | 5 (all lines effective 9/1/19)  | 632 (as of September 1, 2019)      |
| 2020 | 16 (all case carrying)                              | 2          | 2 (all lines effective 7/1/20)  | 654 (as of July 1, 2020)           |

Caseworker turnover (annual basis) has decreased from 22.95% in 2018 to 17.73% in 2019 to 15.65% in 2020. A 2003 study by the GAO found turnover of 30-40% on average nationally. A more recent study in 2019 by the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development found the average state has an annual turnover of 14%-22% for caseworkers, with 17 states having caseworker turnover greater than 25%.

Caseworker turnover data reflects OCFS' progress in retaining staff when compared to the turnover experienced in 2018. This reflects efforts to recruit new qualified staff, but also OCFS's work to improve training and support for both new and existing caseworkers.



### **Policy and Training Work with Muskie School of Public Service**

The work begun with the Muskie School in late 2019 continues. Much of the work with Muskie is related to training and policy review and updating. Progress has been significant as shown in the information below.

- Training
  - Foundations (new worker) Training – Muskie took over the delivery of this training in the Fall of 2020 and continues to work to revise and improve the training for new caseworkers
  - Supervisory Academy
  - Use of a new Learning Management System (LMS), known as Brightspace
    - Reliable learning platform with 24/7 access via all types of devices
    - Better ability to engage staff through modern, accessible, and user-friendly interfaces

- Engaging and interactive course content, including the ability to utilize various types of media and presentation techniques
  - Ability to track and assess trainings completed for each worker (supervisors and managers will be able to track progress of staff through trainings and their successful attainment of knowledge through quizzes)
- Revised substance use training
- Currently in the process of developing trainings for the new LMS focused on
  - Human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children
  - Methamphetamine exposure
- Policies
  - Completed updates:
    - Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children
    - Safe Haven
    - Staff Safety and High-Risk Situations
    - Immunization of Children in the Custody of DHHS
  - Policies in final stages of approval:
    - Intake Screening and Assignment
    - Human Trafficking
    - Youth Transition
  - Policies in the staff and/or stakeholder comment stage:
    - CPS Investigations
    - Family Team Meeting
    - Substance Exposed Infants
  - Policies with management for review:
    - Permanency Policy
    - Adoption Policy
    - Placement with DHHS Employees/AAGs
    - LGBTQ+
  - Policies at the workgroup stage:
    - Authorization of the Use of Psychotropic Medications for Children in Foster Care
    - Resource Home Licensing
    - Entry into Care
  - Policies in the pipeline:
    - Background Check
    - Domestic Violence
    - Decision Making and Service Authorization
    - Collaboration in Child Welfare